

I sat down, corkscrewed the bottle open and poured
a drink, then
I telephoned my girlfriend.

"it's too late for the races but I got the locks
fixed."

"I could have done it,"
she said,

"I could have saved you money ..."

"I know," I said, "but you weren't here ..."

40 minutes later

I was at the racetrack and they were coming out
for the 5th race.

AMERICAN LITERATURE II

personal is best. I knew this professor,
we were drinking beer together and he
said, "I don't see how you can do it."

he's wrong, it's all personal.
history is personal. pulling a shade up
in the morning is. drinking beer is. the
abstract is. the objective is. the waterbug
is, and the sinapism.

nothing is more personal than walking down
a stairway alone
thinking about nothing. I often like to
think about nothing for hours.

this professor, he'd taught too long
while I'd been a night watchman and a
circus hand. there was nothing I could
tell him but I did: "drink your beer,"
I told him, "and tell me about your
wife."

he could only drink his beer so
I told him about my wife.

THE VAMPIRES

I am hungover and in bed and the doorbell rings
it is eleven a.m.

"what the shit?" I ask.

she goes to the door and I hear her talking.

she enters the bedroom and tells me,

"it's a Mr. Sanderson," she says, "he says you
know him and he wants to talk to you."

"Sanderson?" I ask, "what's his first name?"

she comes back with the answer: "he says his first name is Frank."

"never heard of the son of a bitch. tell him to get the hell out of here."

I hear them talking back and forth and I consider all that very unnecessary and I begin to get up and get dressed to run him off.

when I get there he is gone.

"what did he want?" I ask.

"he wanted to talk to you," she says.

"well now, isn't that the cat's tit?"

"he looked like a very nice boy, he looked very sad when you sent him off."

"I don't want to talk to any son of a bitch,"

I tell her.

"well, I would have talked to him," she says.

I walk into the crapper, pull down my pants and my shorts and let it go

that night I am on my 4th or 5th beer when there is a brutal knocking upon the door.

I figure murder, emergency, anything ...

somebody needs help ...

I open the door.

it is a fat son of a bitch and

behind him are 5 or 6 other people

male and female.

"HEY!" screams the fat man, "I'M BO SEAVERS AND WE'VE COME TO SAY HELLO!"

I swing the door shut but he sticks a big shoe in there holding it open.

"hold it," he says, "we're a lot alike, you'll really dig me. many people mistake me for you."

"get your god damned foot out of the jam," I say.

"I've read all your books," he says.

I take the heel of my shoe and crush it down along his toes.

the foot withdraws and I slam the door.

after a moment, empty beercans and bottles hit against the door, then a rock or two.

I hear some curses and then I hear them walking off.

I sit down and open a new beer.

"ever since I was about 16," I tell her,

"people have been after me and it has never stopped: 44 years worth of that.

I don't know what they want with me because, you see, I most certainly dislike them"

"maybe if you'd just give them a chance,"

she says, "you'll find that everybody is an individual if you'll just search them out."

I drain my beer on that one,
then look at her:
"how the fuck did you get in here?"

I walk into the kitchen and find the
scotch, unpeel it and pour a hit as
the phone rings.

I hear her answer:

"who? I'll ask him ..."

I hear her walking toward me
in the kitchen
and I wonder why she doesn't already
know the answer
as I stand there holding the drink
watching the faucet leak
the way they do.

HORSE

as one goes to the racetrack for years one notices
certain characters who are there every day,
people who are poorly dressed and desperate of eye --
as I am.

there was one who actually stank badly, had this
diseased beard.

I often picked him up as he hitch-hiked and I believe
he slept in the bushes.

his theory was that all the jockeys got together in
the jocks' room before the races and they decided
which number to let in -- they chose a number and that
number won almost all day long and that's why all those
sons of bitches were rich: they bet that number.

and there was this one guy I had seen for years at all
the tracks, I was drunk and he bumped me with his elbow
and I said, "hey, Mac, watch that shit!" and he said,
"I got a mind to rub your face in the cement!" and
I said, "wait a minute," and I took my coat off and
laid it on a bench but when I turned around he was
gone.

I still see him at the tracks and the strangest thing
is that he is getting thinner and weaker and older and
I seem to be getting younger and stronger, but I don't
think it's me, I think it's him, I don't know what he's
on -- maybe a long string of losers.

then there's this blonde, she was always fat but it
didn't seem to matter, she had a way of picking up the
winners, some of the winners after the races, day after
day, she only bet the horses in a very off-hand manner
but now I see her in the clubhouse all dressed fine,
still fat, and she knows that I know but I don't say
anything. so I'm in the clubhouse too, so maybe I've
done some whoring in my own way.